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COMMON BIRDS OF NORTH CAROLINA

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Common Birds of North Carolina Gardens, Farms and Orchards

By Laurence H. Snyder,
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INTRODUCTION

This bulletin is presented to meet the demand for a small booklet giving the names and descriptions of common birds of North Carolina. The request for such a reference comes from two sources: first, from farmers who have the very practical problem of attracting and recognizing birds which are of aid in destroying crop and garden pests; and, second, from farm women, school teachers, boys and girls and their parents who have an interest in the birds they see around them and want to know their names and habits. If this bulletin can answer some of the questions continually asked about North Carolina birds, and introduce more of our people to the real pleasures of bird observation, it will have served its purpose.

The subject matter is based on observation made over many years in this State. In addition free use has been made of Pearson and Brimley's "Birds of North Carolina", and various publications of the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The pictures were drawn from actual specimens by Miss Elizabeth Haban.

A complete list of the birds of the State would include nearly 350 species and subspecies. Many of these are rare stragglers; many are not of any great economic importance, and many are not of particular interest to the average person. To make this list really available for ready reference, 100 of the birds more commonly met with have been chosen and described. For more advanced reference the following books will be found of value: Chapman, "Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America"; Pearson, Brimley and Brimley, "The Birds of North Carolina" (out of print); Reed, "Pocket Bird Guide" (2 volumes); and the various bird publications of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

ATTRACTING BIRDS AROUND THE HOME

It is not difficult to attract birds to the farm and home. In the yard and garden perhaps the two prime necessities are an adequate supply of water and a deficient supply of cats. Cats are undoubtedly the worst enemies of birds around the home. For the farm, plenty of nesting sites and safe retreats are necessary. This means bushes and vines along fencerows, thickets along creeks, trees and shrubs in the yard, and so on. Birds must have hiding places where they feel safe. They must also have ready water. Food is mentioned last of all, because natural food is so abundant in this State during the entire year that artificial feeding is seldom necessary. Even in winter, except during heavy snows in the western part of the State, natural food can usually take care of the bird population.

Food trees and plants however, will prove a source of attraction. Among the many plants recommended for this purpose are the wild rose, wild strawberry, sunflowers, millet, asters, mulberry, hawthorn, wild cherry, sassafras, alders, holly, dogwood, honey suckle, Virginia creeper, privet, haw, persimmon, huckleberry, and wild grapes. A variety of these scattered about the farm or garden, and a supply of available water, will surely bring birds.

The water supply may be a natural shallow stream, or it may be artificial. Bird baths close to the house will bring birds where they may be watched and enjoyed. A bird bath should be shallow, not more than two or three inches deep in the center, sloping towards the edges, and roughened at the bottom to prevent slipping. They are easily made from concrete, or by using old shallow saucers of large size. Be sure to keep the bath always filled.

Another method of attraction is to use bird houses. Bluebirds, purple martins, chickadees, woodpeckers and others may be attracted in this way. A bluebird house should be five inches square inside, and about 8 or 10 inches deep. The opening should be near the top, about two inches across. The roof should slope. The house should be placed on a pole or against a tree, in an open spot, about ten feet above the ground. It is not necessary or advisable to have a perch outside the house. Chickadees, nuthatches, titmice or downy woodpeckers may use a house of this size, although bluebirds are the most likely tenants. The larger woodpeckers will require larger houses.

For martins, the inside dimensions should be six by six inches, and the opening two and a half inches across, near the floor. A martin house may have several rooms of this size. Gourds make equally attractive homes for martins. The houses or gourds should be placed from 15 to 20 feet above the ground, in an open spot. Be sure to have all bird houses up at least by the first of March.

Robins, phoebes, swallows and some other birds will often nest in a house in which two sides are left entirely open; in other words, a protecting shelf or bracket. These should be protected above by branches or the eaves of a roof. Paint does not prevent any bird from using a house, but browns, greens and white are to be preferred to brighter colors. The usual mistakes made in building bird houses are first, making the house too large; second, making the hole too large; and third, carelessness in placing the house.

IDENTIFYING THE BIRDS

Our North Carolina birds may be divided into groups based on their occurrence in the State. First we have the permanent residents, those which stay here all year round, such as the bluebird. Then there are the summer visitors, which come to us in spring and leave in the fall to spend the winter farther south, such as the wood thrush and purple martin. Again we have a series of winter visitors, which leave us in the spring to nest north of us, such as the myrtle warbler, winter wren and brown creeper. Some of our winter visitors breed in summer on our higher mountains. Then we have the transients or migrants, birds which only pass through the State on their way north or south in the

spring or fall, such as the cliff swallow and black-poll warbler. Finally we have a list of rare, irregular and straggling species, such as the evening grosbeak and white crowned sparrow, whose occurrence cannot be predicted.

As an aid to those who are just beginning the study of birds, the following things are worth remembering. Birds are grouped in "families", and those in each family are alike, so that if you can tell what group a new bird belongs to by a first glance, it will be easier to look it up and identify it. Thus, small, brightly colored birds seen up in the trees in the woods are apt to be warblers (a family found only in the Americas), or perhaps vireos. Brown-streaked birds on the ground or in bushes are apt to be finches of some kind, such as song sparrows or field sparrows. There are more than twenty kinds of sparrows in North Carolina, so that all sparrows are not "English sparrows". The native sparrows are beneficial and should be protected.

In general, birds with long, slender beaks are insect eaters, while birds with thick heavy beaks are seed eaters. Birds with flat broad beaks usually catch insects while on the wing. The insect eaters include the chickadees, titmice, nuthatches, warblers, vireos, creepers, kinglets, swallows, flycatchers, and woodpeckers. The seed eaters include the finches, sparrows, grosbeaks, blackbirds, orioles, larks and tanagers. Many birds, of course, eat both, and in fact most of the seed eaters eat some insects as well.

To help you to know how to look up a new bird, the following facts are given.

Birds with bright yellow or orange markings:
- Many of the warblers
- Yellow-throated vireo
- Goldfinch
- The orioles
- Meadowlark (under side)
- Flicker (under side).

Birds with red markings:
- Robin
- Cardinal
- The tanagers
- Purple finch
- Orchard oriole
- The woodpeckers (top of head)
- The Towhee (sides)
- The bluebird (breast).

Birds with blue markings:
- Bluebird
- Blue-gray gnatcatcher
- The swallows
- Blue grosbeak
- Indigo bunting
- Blue jay
- Kingfisher.

Birds mostly black:

- Purple martin
- Crow
- The blackbirds
- The grackles.

Birds mostly black and white:

- Black and white warbler
- Black poll warbler
- Towhee
- Bobolink
- The woodpeckers.

Birds mostly brownish:

- The thrushes
- The wrens
- The brown thrasher
- The brown creeper
- The sparrows
- The rough-winged swallow
- The cedar waxwing
- The flicker
- The meadow lark
- The nighthawk
- The whip-poor-will
- The cuckoos.

Birds greenish and yellowish green:

- The kinglets
- The vireos
- Most of the warblers (upper parts)
- The Acadian flycatcher
- The hummingbird.

Birds mostly grayish:

- Some of the warblers
- Chickadees
- Tufted titmouse
- The nuthatches
- Catbird
- Mockingbird
- Junco
- The shrikes
- The flycatchers
- The chimney swift.

Birds with white outer tail-feathers which show plainly in flight:

- Blue-gray gnatcatcher
- Vesper sparrow
- Junco
- Meadowlark.

In most cases, especially with the bright colored birds, it must be remembered that the females are almost always duller than the males, while the young are not only duller, but frequently quite different in appearance.

In the following pages descriptions and pictures are given of the individual birds. For further information about these or other birds, write to the Department of Zoology, North Carolina State College, Raleigh, N. C.

ORDER PASSERES

FAMILY TURDIDAE (The Thrushes)

Bluebird. *Sialia sialis.* Blue above, breast reddish, belly white. Six and one half inches long. It is found throughout the State the entire year.

No more familiar bird than the bluebird exists in North Carolina. It is beloved by all, and is as useful as it is beautiful. Nearly two-thirds of its food consists of insects, mostly harmful grasshoppers, beetles, and weevils. Wild fruit and some seeds are eaten, but no cultivated crops are attacked to any extent. Bluebirds nesting in a bird house in the garden or orchard are as desirable tenants as one may ever hope to have.

Robin. *Planesticus migratorius.* Grayish above, reddish below; throat white streaked with black. Ten inches long. Found through the State all the year.

Although robins are with us all year, it is probable that the winter birds move north in the spring and their places are taken by others coming from farther south. The robin has made for itself a place in the hearts of everyone. Occasionally, however, its fruit-eating habits lay it open to criticism. As a matter of fact it eats many times as much wild fruit as cultivated fruit, and orchards may always be protected by planting around the edge mulberries or other wild species such as holly, blackalder or wild cherry. Nearly half of the robin's food consists of beetles, grasshoppers, caterpillars, earthworms and other animal matter. The familiar mud and grass nest with the eggs of "robin's-egg blue" will be found in any convenient crotch, or on a shelf or beam or other support near a building.

Wood thrush. *Hylocichla mustelina.* Bright brown above, white below, with large round spots on the breast and sides. About eight inches long. This thrush is a summer visitor in the whole State, arriving early in April and remaining until October.

The wood thrush or "wood robin" is our only summer thrush, except on the higher mountains. It is a common visitor in our gardens and open woods and its song at evening and in the early morning is one of the most beautiful of all bird songs. The full liquid notes sound like "ee - o - lee, lee -oh - lee -- leeee!" The wood thrush apparently does no harm to gardens or crops of any sort.

Other thrushes. The **hermit thrush** arrives from the far north just as the wood thrush leaves for the south, and goes northward again when the wood thrush arrives in the spring. Unlike the wood thrush, however, the hermit does not frequent our gardens, but remains in deep woods, usually near water. It can be told by the reddish tail which is much brighter than the back. The **olive-backed thrush,** the **gray-cheeked thrush,** and the **Wilson's thrush** or veery, pass through the State during the migrations, but only nest on the higher mountains. All of the thrushes are fine songsters, and it is to be regretted that we do not have more opportunity to hear them at their best. The comparatively few listeners in the deep retreats of the northern woods enjoy a privilege which is the ambition of all true bird lovers.

FAMILY SYLVIIDAE (the kinglets)

Blue-gray gnatcatcher. *Polioptila caerulea.* Bluish gray above, grayish white below. Outer tailfeathers white, inner ones black. Narrow black border on front and sides of head. Four and one-half inches long. Found throughout the State in summer.

This tiny bird is one of the earliest spring arrivals, coming up from the south in late March, and remaining with us until September or early October. It spends most of its time high in the trees, in open woods or along streams. The nest is a beautiful structure, covered on the outside with lichens, lined with grasses, and usually saddled onto a horizontal branch ten feet or more from the ground. Gnatcatchers are not of any great economic importance.

The kinglets. Two kinglets are found in the State. They are both very small birds, about four inches long. The **golden-crowned kinglet** is olive-greenish above, whitish below, with a bright yellowish patch on top of the head; a white line over the eye. The **ruby-crowned kinglet** is similar but with a concealed red spot on the head of the male; no line over the eye; two whitish wing bars. Both kinglets are winter visitors throughout most of the State; the golden-crowned kinglet breeds on some of the higher mountains, but the ruby-crown is only a transient visitor.

The kinglets, like the blue-gray gnatcatcher, are birds of the trees, sometimes hard to see clearly because of their very small size. They are both good singers and, when once learned, the song is not easily forgotten. During their winter stay with us, kinglets may frequent orchards, where they undoubtedly do good service.

FAMILY PARIDAE (the nuthatches and tits)

Carolina chickadee. *Penthestes carolinensis.* Ashy gray above, with top of head and throat black, sides of head white, whitish below. Length, about four inches. Permanent resident.

This acrobatic, friendly little bird is one of the greatest friends of the farmer. It spends the entire year with us, hunting for food, and so does especial service by destroying winter stages of insects, eggs and hibernating adults. More than two-thirds of the chickadee's food consists of insects, among them tent caterpillars, plant lice, weevils, ants, wasps and spiders. The nest is in a hollow tree or old stump, lined with moss, feathers, cotton, grasses of other soft material. Four to eight white eggs, blotched with brown are laid. The sharp "chick - a - dee - dee - dee" is a well known sound in the woods. The bird also has a four-syllabled minor whistle. The northern form, the black-capped chickadee, is also found on some of our higher mountains.

Tufted titmouse. *Baeolophus bicolor.* Gray above, white below. Forehead black. A crest on the head. Six inches long. Permanent resident.

This small, gray, crested bird with the loud clear whistle, like a boy calling his dog, is one of our best-known birds. It is with us all year, but becomes best known in winter. Its food habits are similar to those of the chickadee, and it deserves equal protection. It nests in hollow trees and stumps, but will sometimes come to bird houses, where it is a welcome and valuable visitor. It is one of the easiest birds to attract to the yard by winter feeding. Suet, bread crumbs, nuts, and grain will all help to bring these birds to the feeding shelf.

The nuthatches. Three species of nuthatches are found in the State. The **brown-headed** nuthatch, *Sitta pusilla*, is bluish gray above, whitish below, with the top of the head brownish and a white spot on the nape of the neck. It is four and one-half inches long. The **white-breasted nuthatch,** *Sitta carolinensis*, is larger (six inches), bluish gray above, with the top of the head and the front part of the back shiny black; white below; outer tail feathers tipped with white. The **red-breasted nuthatch,** *Sitta canadensis*, is similar to the white-breasted, but smaller (four and half inches), with a heavy black line through the eye, reaching back along the sides of the head and neck; underparts reddish except for the white throat.

The red-breasted nuthatch is a rather rare winter visitor but the other two are common permanent residents. They have the habit of spiraling down around a tree trunk, seemingly running downward more easily than upward. The nuthatches do no harm, and they accomplish a great deal of good. Beetles, moths, caterpillars, wasps, ants, and spiders with acorns and nuts, make up their food. They nest in holes in trees, often excavated by the birds themselves. They are very tame, and their nasal call notes become very familiar, especially in winter.

FAMILY CERTHIIDAE (the creepers)

Brown creeper. *Certhia familiaris americana.* Brown and white above, white below. Five and a half inches long. Winter visitor.

The Brown creeper comes to North Carolina from the far north in early October, and remains until April. It is easily identified, for it is always seen flattened against a tree trunk, working its way spirally upward, searching carefully for insects and eggs hidden in the bark. Arriving at the top of a trunk, it drops immediately to the bottom of the next one, starting its climb all over again. It eats harmful insects entirely, and is a good friend to man.

FAMILY TROGLODYTIDAE (the wrens)

Carolina wren. *Thryothorus ludovicianus.* Bright reddish brown above; wings and tail barred with black. A long white line over eye. Underparts, creamy buff. Five and a half inches long. Permanent resident.

This large wren is the only wren common in most of the State. Its loud, clear song can be heard throughout the entire year. It is a two- or three-syllabled whistle several times repeated, as "do - *ree*per, do - *ree*per, do - *ree*per," or "free - dom, free - dom, free - dom." Wrens are nervous little birds, continually moving, jerking the tail, and scolding. Practically their entire food consists of insects, and they are tireless in their hunting.

Other wrens. The **Bewick's wren,** *Tryomanes bewicki,* a smaller dark brown wren with a long black tail, is a summer visitor in the mountains, and is found occasionally in winter in the central portion of the State. The **house wren,** *Troglodytes aedon,* the common summer wren of the north, is only a transient in this State, passing through on its way north in April and early May, and returning on its way south in September or October. **The winter wren,** *Nannus hiemalis,* is a common winter visitor, and breeds on some of the highest mountains. In winter it mostly hides away in the thickets along woodland streams. The **short-billed marsh wren** is a rare transient, but the **long-billed marsh wren,** *Telmatodytes palustris* is a winter visitor along the coast.

FAMILY MIMIDAE (the mockers)

Brown thrasher. *Toxostoma rufum.* Upper parts reddish brown; underparts white, heavily streaked with black. About eleven inches in length. Found throughout the State in summer, and in the eastern half in winter.

The brown thrasher, or "brown thrush" as it is sometimes called by mistake, is one of our finest singers. It is a ground bird, spending most of its time scratching in thickets, where it gets its food. When it is ready to sing, however, it mounts to the topmost twig of a tree, where its wonderful melody is poured forth. Most people mistake the song for that of the mockingbird, but by listening closely the difference may be detected. The thrasher repeats each phrase, so that its song is made up of couplets. It nests low down, in thickets and tangles. Its food is mostly beetles, bugs, caterpillars and wild fruit. Less than a tenth of its food is from berries and other crops.

Catbird. *Dumetella carolinensis.* Slate gray, with top of head and tail black. A chestnut spot on the rump. Nine inches long. A summer visitor in the whole State, arriving in late April, and leaving in October. Sometimes winters in the east.

The catbird is too well known to need description. It is fearless, and comes to our very doors. It is a fine singer, but often spoils its song with its well known cat calls. Its food consists largely of fruit, and in many places it is a serious pest of orchards and berry patches. Insects are also eaten to some extent, especially beetles, crickets, cutworms, and ants. It nests low, in tangles and vines, laying three or four bluish-green eggs with no markings.

Mockingbird. *Mimus polyglottis.* Gray above, whitish below. Wings and tail black, with large white patch on each wing and the tips of the tail feathers. Permanent resident east of the mountains. The adult bird is about ten inches long.

The mockingbird is the prize singer of American birds. Its powers of mocking are undisputed and well developed. It frequently sings at night, sharing this habit with the chat. The mocker's food is all in its favor, being made up of beetles, ants, bees, wasps, caterpillars, and wild fruit such as holly, smilax, pokeberry, elderberry and sour gum. Cultivated fruit forms a very small part of the diet. It nests in low trees or vines, usually near houses.

Family Mniotiltidae (the warblers)

Redstart. *Setophaga ruticilla.* Black, with orange-red blotches on sides, wings, and tail. Belly white. Female dull. Length, about five inches. Summer visitor in central and western part of the State, transient in the east.

This brilliant little warbler is a common visitor in our summer woods from early April to October. It is continually on the move, flitting here and there like a living flame. The wings and tail are continually being spread, showing up the bright orange patches. These birds like low woods near water, and here they build their nests in saplings, laying four whitish eggs speckled with brown. As in the case of nearly all the warblers, the female is much duller and less conspicuous than the brightly colored male. The redstart's food consists almost wholly of insects. The slender beak would not be adapted to crushing seeds or hard berries, but is well adapted to an insect diet.

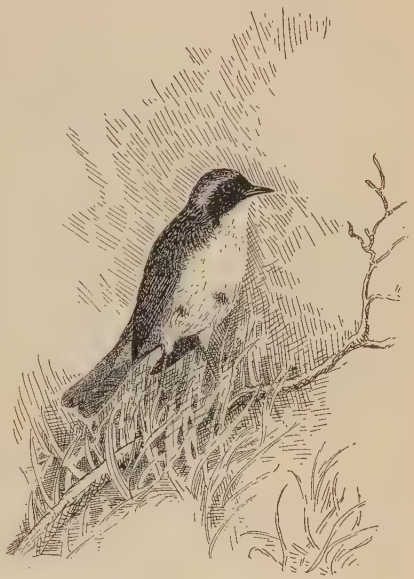
Hooded warbler. *Wilsonia citrina.* Olive green above, yellow below. The male has a black hood covering the top of the head and running around the neck to the throat, giving the effect of a yellow mask across the face. Length, five and one-half inches. Summer visitor.

This is a bird of the woods, liking low wet places. It is a beautiful thing, well worth a trip to see. Its song is loud and clear, and sounds as if the bird said "Come to the woods or you can't *see me!*" The male is easily found as it flits around from bush to bush, but the female is much duller, lacking the black mask, and is hard to identify. The well built nest is found within four feet of the ground, in a low bush or bunch of reeds, and contains four white eggs speckled with brown and gray.

Yellow-breasted chat. *Icteria virens.* Olive green above, bright yellow below. A white line from eye to bill. Length, seven and one-half inches. Summer visitor.

This is the largest of the warblers, and one of the best known. It is a veritable clown, performing all sorts of odd evolutions in the air. You may see it fly suddenly upward, singing, and remain suspended in mid-air although its wings and tail are flapping ludicrously. It will not permit of too close an approach, but dives into the thick bushes. It is one of the few birds that sings at night. It remains with us from April until September, nesting in thickets during May and June. The chat is sometimes known as "Pompey".

Maryland Yellowthroat. *Geothlypis trichas.* Olive green above, yellow below. A black mask over the forehead, eyes, and sides of neck. Length five inches. Summer visitor.



This is probably our best known warbler. Look for it near the ground, especially along streams. It likes the low scrubby bushes in wet places. As you approach it will scold impatiently; if you stand quietly you will hear the song: "witch - i - *tee*, witch - i - *tee*, witch - i - *tee*." It nests on or near the ground, in grass or weeds. Like all the warblers, it is an insect eater. It is an early arrival, usually coming in March.

Ovenbird. *Seiurus aurocapillus.* Brownish above, white below, streaked with black. An orange spot on the top of the head, with a black line on either side. Length, six inches. Summer visitor.

The ovenbird frequents the open woods. It nests on the ground, building a wonderful dome-shaped structure, with the entrance on one side. The whole thing is covered with leaves and looks like the surrounding ground, so that it is difficult to find. The song of the ovenbird is easy to recognize. It starts out softly, growing louder with each note: teacher, *teacher*, TEACHER, *TEACHER!* The bird arrives in April and stays until October. At first glance it may look like a thrush, but the stripes on the head, as well as the habit of walking, instead of hopping as the thrushes do, will help to distinguish it.

Prairie warbler. *Dendroica discolor.* Bright greenish above, yellow below with heavy black streaks on sides. Two yellowish wing bars. Conspicuous white patches on the tail. Length, four and a half to five inches. Summer visitor east of the mountains.

This tiny warbler likes bushy fields, open woods, or scrubby pastures. Its song is peculiar and easily recognized. It is "zee - zee - zee - zee - zee - zee - zee", each note a little higher than the last, as though it were singing the scale. It is with us from April to September, and nests low in bushes or saplings.

Pine warbler. *Dendroica vigorsi.* Olive green above, yellow on the breast turning to white on the belly. Two white wing bars. White patches on the outer tail feathers. Length, five and a half inches. Permanent resident except in the mountains, where it is a summer visitor.

This friendly warbler is our only year-round resident of the warbler family. As its name implies it prefers pine woods, where it nests high on a projecting branch, laying four or five whitish eggs, spotted, chiefly at the larger end, with brownish. The song is very much like that of the chipping sparrow, but more musical. In winter this bird comes close to houses and becomes very tame. The female is rather like the male, a thing which does not often happen among the warblers, but even in this case the female is much duller. Doubtless the dull colors aid in protecting the female from enemies as she sits on the nest.

Yellow throated warbler. *Dendroica dominica.* Gray above, throat yellow, belly white. Two white wing bars. White patches on the outer tail feathers. Sides streaked with black. Five and a quarter inches long. Summer visitor.

This common warbler is an early arrival, coming in March and remaining until September. It prefers pine woods, where it generally nests, high off the ground. It has a loud ringing song easily learned. It sounds like "see - see - see - see - *wee*". It is usually found high in trees near water, where it spends its time hunting the insects which are the invariable food of the warbler family.

Myrtle warbler. *Dendroica coronata.* Gray and black streaked above, white below, heavily streaked with black on the breast. Two white wing bars, and white in the tail. Four bright yellow patches, especially in spring: one on the top of the head, one on the rump, and one on each side of the breast. Length, five and a half inches. Winter visitor.

Most of our warblers come in spring and go away in fall. This one reverses the process, coming to us from the far north in October, and remaining with us until May. During the winter it is common everywhere, and one may hear its scolding note and see the bird in its dull winter plumage. In the spring a great change takes place. It molts, and four beautiful yellow spots appear, so that the bird is very conspicuous. It sings, too, before leaving us. In addition to the usual insect food of warblers, it eats wild berries while here for the winter.

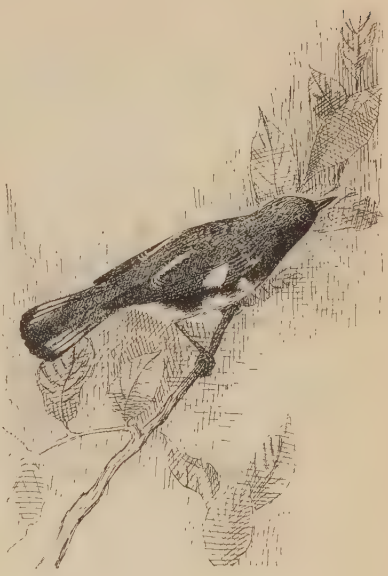
Yellow warbler. *Dendroica aestiva.* Yellow all over, streaked with dull reddish on the sides and under parts. Five inches long. Summer visitor.

This beautiful warbler is sometimes known as summer warbler, summer yellow-bird, or wild canary. (The goldfinch is also known as wild canary but has black head, wings and tail, unlike the yellow warbler.) Arriving in April, the yellow warbler only remains a short while, leaving in July or August. While here it sings a good deal, having a thin sharp song: "chee, chee - we, chee - wee - wee - wee, *che - wee*". It nests in orchards, gardens and groves, in small trees or large shrubs.

Black and white warbler. *Mniotilta varia.* Streaked black and white all over. About five inches long. Summer visitor.

It might be thought at first that this bird was a small woodpecker. It creeps along branches, picking insects from the bark, and its black and white markings look somewhat like the woodpecker. A closer glance reveals that it is a typical warbler, slim, with a slender beak, and creeping rather than climbing. Its thin weak song sounds like "see-er, see-er, see-er". It nests on the ground in sloping woods, at the base of a tree. It is with us from March to October.

Other warblers. Altogether there are forty-two kinds of warblers found in North Carolina. Many of them nest far north of us and winter south of us, so that we only see them for a short while in the spring and fall as they pass through. Some of the most common warblers which we have not described are the **parula,** a summer visitor; the **black-throated blue,** a striking dark blue summer visitor with a white patch on each wing; the **water-thrushes,** brownish streaked warblers found on the ground along streams; the **black poll,** a streaked blackish migrant very common in May and again in October; and the **prothonotary,** a beautiful greenish warbler with a bright yellowish head, found in the eastern swamps in summer.



FAMILY VIREONIDAE (the vireos)

White-eyed vireo. *Vireo griseus.* Olive greenish above, white below, with a faint wash of yellow on breast and sides. Two white wing bars. Iris of the eye white. Five and a quarter inches in length. Summer visitor.

The vireos are rather plain little birds, hard to identify at first, and one finds that one comes to know them by their actions, habits, and songs, rather than by their colors. The white-eyed vireo inhabits thickets and scrubby woods, especially near water. Its sharp inquisitive call is very distinctive, and is snapped out at you whenever you approach. "Pitch-i-tu-*whee*-yu!", it seems to say, or sometimes "*whit*-chu, pitch-u-*whee!*" It is a very early arrival, coming in March, and remaining until October.

Yellow-throated vireo. *Lanivireo flavifrons.* Olive green above, bright yellow below on throat and breast. Belly white. Two white wing bars. Five and a half inches in length. Summer visitor.

The yellow-throated vireo arrives later than the previous species, coming in mid-April. It has the same general habits, but prefers groves of large trees to the thickets inhabited by the white-eye. Its notes are quite different: a rich, languid, lilting air, with an appealing quality, hard to express on paper. It builds a typical vireo nest, suspended, like a cup from a fork in a branch. From these nests the vireos are often called hang birds, or swinging birds.

Red-eyed vireo. *Vireosylva olivacea.* Olive green above, white below. A white line above the eye, bordered with black above and dusky below. The iris of the eye red. Length, six inches. Summer visitor.

This is the best known of the vireos, as it comes to our yards, our city streets and parks, and sings incessantly all day. Its song is in short, snappy sentences, for which it is sometimes called "preacher-bird". In habits it is similar to the rest of the vireos, eating a purely insect diet.

Other vireos. The **blue-headed vireo** is a migrant in spring and fall, while a sub-species, the **mountain vireo** nests in the mountains. These vireos have the top and sides of the head bluish. The **Philadelphia vireo** (similar to the red-eye but showing no wing-bars) is a rare migrant. The **warbling vireo** (also similar to the red-eye) is a rare summer visitor in the mountains.

FAMILY LANIIDAE (the shrikes)

The shrikes. Three kinds of shrikes occur in the State, all very much alike. The common one, which occurs throughout the State in fall and winter, is the **migrant shrike,** a subspecies of the loggerhead, which is confined to the coast. Shrikes are fairly large birds, about the size of a mockingbird, and very similar in coloring. They are gray above, white below, wings and tail black with white patches. There is a heavy black line through the eye which the mockingbird does not have. The shrike, or "butcher bird" catches insects, mice, moles, and sometimes small birds, and impales them on a thorn or barb-wire fence to hold them. Its hooked beak is well made for tearing.

FAMILY AMPELIDAE (the waxwings)

Cedar waxwing. *Ampelis cedrorum.* Soft cinnamon-brown. A yellow band across the end of the tail. The end of each secondary feather in the wing has a red tip like a drop of sealing-wax, whence the name of the bird. A crest on the head. Length, seven inches. Permanent resident, but very irregular.

This beautiful soft silky bird is most often seen in winter, when it goes in flocks, drifting from place to place, here one day and gone the next. It has no song, but makes a soft hissing sound. The plumage is the most perfect imaginable, no individual feather being visible. The bird seems artificial, "made-in-Japan" and it is fitting that of the three known species of waxwings, two occur in Japan.

FAMILY HIRUNDINADAE (the swallows)

Rough winged swallow. *Stelgidopteryx serripenis.* Brownish gray above, breast light grayish, belly white. Long pointed wings. Five and three quarters inches long. Summer visitor.

A small brown swallow, arriving early and leaving early. It nests in holes in banks, either second-hand, or excavated by itself. Like the other swallows, it has remarkable powers of flight, and catches insects on the wing, darting and swooping in tireless pursuit. It is easily told from our other common swallows by its absence of metallic blue and green colors.

Purple martin (black martin). *Progne subis.* Blue-black all over. Female with white underparts. Long pointed wings. Eight inches long. Summer visitor.

Martins are well known by their liking for human companionship. They nest commonly in gourds or boxes in this State. The English sparrows frequently take over the boxes and drive out the martins, but this may partially be overcome by closing the entrance holes during the winter, opening them again in spring. Martins are of great value in destroying insects around the home. This is a different bird from the so-called "bee martin", which is another name for the kingbird.

Other swallows are mostly migrants with us. The **tree swallow,** bluish-green above and white below, is common in the spring migrations, and is occasionally seen in the fall. The **cliff swallow,** blue above with red on the sides of the head and throat, white below with a blue spot on the throat, is sometimes seen in the migrations. It too nests north of here. The **barn swallow,** easily told by its deeply forked tail and reddish underparts, is a common migrant, and nests in a few places in the mountains, and again in a few places along the coast. The **bank swallow,** so much like the rough-winged swallow as to be indistinguishable in flight, is a rare migrant.

Family Tanagridae (the tanagers)

The tanagers. The most common of these birds is the **summer tanager.** (*Piranga rubra*), rose-red all over, with no conspicuous black markings. The female is quite different, being yellowish-green. This tanager arrives in April and remains until September. It is very friendly, often nesting in our yards. The nest is shallow, built on a low horizontal branch. These tanagers are commonly found in open woods, orchards, groves near houses, and even in pine forests. Its song is very similar to the robin's, but its call note is distinctive: "*tee*-tu-tuck", on a descending scale, sharply uttered.

The **Scarlet tanager,** with its beautiful contrast of black wings and tail against a scarlet body, is a rather rare migrant in most of the State. In the mountains, however, it is a summer visitor.

FAMILY FRINGILLIDAE (the finches)

Indigo bunting. *Passerina cyanea.* Deep blue all over with wings and tail nearly black. Female brownish, lighter below. Length, five and a half inches. Summer visitor.

The beautiful indigo bird is a common summer visitor, frequenting clearings and fields where there are many low bushes. It is a late arrival, not coming until late April, and it remains until late October. Its song is loud and clear, given with much spontaneous enthusiasm. The nest is well concealed in low thickets. Three or four white eggs are laid.

Blue grosbeak. *Guiraca caerulea.* Blue, with reddish bars on the wings. Female yellowish brown. Length, seven inches. Summer visitor.

The blue grosbeak seems like an overgrown indigo bunting. It has the same appearance, the same general habits, but is more sedate; it frequents the same sort of localities, but will tolerate more open country. Its song is different: more varied, and very beautiful.

Cardinal (Redbird). *Cardinalis cardinalis.* Bright red, with throat and a ring around the beak black. A conspicuous crest. Bill light red, showing up clearly against the black face. Female duller. Length, about eight inches. Permanent resident.

Although here all the year, it is in winter, when few other birds are singing, that we most appreciate the red bird. From an economic standpoint, too, it is a valuable bird, feeding on many of our worst insect pests as well as harmful weed seeds. The cotton boll worm, the cotton cut worm, the codling moth, grasshoppers, scale insects, weevils, cucumber beetles, click beetles, and other injurious insects are eaten. Among the weed seeds it eats those of bur, crabgrass, smartweed, plantain, foxtail, and chickweed. The nest, with three white eggs spotted with brown and gray, is placed in a shrub, tangle, or low tree.

Towhee. *Pipilo erythropthalmus.* Black above and on throat and breast, sides reddish, belly white. White patches on tip of tail. Length, about eight inches. Winter visitor in the whole State, also found in summer in the mountains and at the coast.

This is a bird of many names: towhee, joree, chewink, joerigger, ground robin, and others. It is to be found in thickets and bushy growths, especially near the edge of a woods, where it spends much time on the ground, scratching away at the leaves like a chicken. Four or five white eggs, thickly spotted with reddish brown, are placed in the nest, which is on or very near the ground. The call note is very characteristic: a sharp "che-*whee*" or "to-*whee*." The song is pleasant: a melodious "*whe*-chu, weedle-deedle-de".

Song sparrow. *Melospiza melodia.* Streaked brownish gray and reddish above. Grayish underneath, with heavy brown streaks. One spot in center of breast larger than the rest. Length, six and a quarter inches. Winter visitor throughout the State, also breeds in the mountains and in some places along the coast.

In its summer home the song sparrow is found in yards, gardens, along fence rows, and anywhere where there are bushes. In winter it seems to prefer the tangles along streams and the edges of ponds, or the grown-over fence rows in scrubby fields. Its song, given constantly during the summer and sparingly in the winter, is a gay, sweet refrain, full of the joy of living. The song sparrow is a very valuable bird from an economic standpoint. Its food consists mostly of harmful weed seeds, though some insects, such as weevils, wasps, bugs and caterpillars, are eaten.

Junco. *Junco hyemalis.* Slate gray above and on the throat and breast. Belly white. Outer tail feathers white. Six inches long. Winter visitor.

The junco or snowbird arrives here from the far north late in October, and remains with us until late April. It is abundant in old fields, along roadsides, and in the edges of woods. The dark body with the white outer tail feathers which are conspicuous when the bird flies, make it readily identified. Its call is a soft chip, but in spring before it leaves it sings a low song. Its food is largely made up of harmful weed seeds, with a sprinkling of caterpillars, beetles, ants, bugs, and spiders. The junco should be protected as a very beneficial bird.

Field sparrow. *Spizella pusilla.* Back streaked brown and reddish, top of head chestnut, grayish white underparts. No spots on the breast. Bill light, showing up conspicuously. Length, five and a half inches. Permanent resident.

Throughout the year this friendly sparrow is found in scrubby fields and open country. It eats mostly weed seeds, but also insects, especially during the summer. Its song is a series of short whistles, on a slightly ascending scale: a beautiful song with an appealing quality. It sings frequently in the evening, and in the winter the song is exceptionally welcome. The nest is on or near the ground in fields with four or five white eggs, heavily spotted with brown.

Chipping sparrow. *Spizella passerina.* Back reddish brown, streaked with black. Top of head chestnut. Underparts grayish white. Bill black. Rump gray. Two inconspicuous white wing bars. Length about five inches. Summer visitor in the western and central parts of the State, resident in the east.

The familiar chippy is an early arrival, coming in March and remaining until November. Its monotonous trill: "chip-chip-chip-chip-chip-chip," rapidly delivered, is heard all day long in spring and early summer. The cares of nesting, however, seem to stop the song. The nest is a small cup-shaped structure, always lined with horse hair, placed in a tree, or sometimes in bushes or vines in the garden. The bird is a real garden friend, coming close to the house in its search for food. It eats many noxious weed seeds, as well as insect pests, and is a most beneficial bird.

White-throated sparrow. *Zonotrichia albicollis.* Back reddish brown and black streaked, with some white markings. Three white stripes on head. Throat white, breast ashy. Nearly seven inches long. Winter visitor.

Arriving from Canada and northward in October, the white-throat remains with us until the middle of May. Its plaintive song, easily recognized, is heard throughout the winter, but especially on warm days towards spring. This is probably our most abundant winter bird and is found in the fields, in scrubby growth, edges of woods, gardens, and farms everywhere. It feeds on weed seeds, berries, and some insects. It is hard to conceive of the enormous number of these birds that spend the winter with us. They are always found in little flocks, seeming to enjoy each others company.

English sparrow. *Passer domesticus.* Ashy gray above, streaked with black and reddish, grayish white below. One chestnut wing bar and one white bar on each wing. Male with large black patch on breast and throat, not found in female. Length, six and a third inches. Permanent resident.

The pestiferous English sparrow has been in America about eighty years, and in North Carolina for nearly fifty. It is evidently here to stay, and it has a bad reputation. There is no doubt that it drives away our native birds to some extent, especially those like bluebirds which nest in bird houses. It is said that a swinging bird house without a perch under the entrance hole will not be acceptable to sparrows. This bird is not protected by state or federal laws, and may be shot or trapped.

Other sparrows. Among the other sparrows found in the State may be mentioned the **vesper sparrow,** a common winter visitor, distinguished as it flies by its white outer tail feathers; the **savannah sparrow,** another winter visitor found in open fields; the **grasshopper sparrow,** a small summer visitor with short wings and tail; the **swamp sparrow,** a winter visitor very much like the song sparrow but without streaks on the breast, found in wet places; and the **fox sparrow,** a large handsome reddish winter visitor.

Goldfinch. *Astragalinus tristis.* Bright yellow, with top of head, wings, and tail black. Two white bands on wings. Female duller. Male also much duller in winter. Length, five inches. Permanent resident in most of the State.

This beautiful bird is a common visitor in our yards and gardens, swinging on a flower stalk, or flitting from bush to bush. In winter the dull plumage makes the bird inconspicuous, but in summer the males are strikingly handsome. Weed seeds of all kinds are eaten, as well as some flower and vegetable seeds. The nesting period is very late, running through July and August. The nest is beautifully constructed, and lined with soft down; it is placed fairly low in a small tree. Four to six pale bluish or greenish eggs are laid. The goldfinch is sometimes called "wild canary", "lettuce bird", or "thistle bird". It flies in a series of small undulations, chirping on each downward swoop.

Purple finch. *Carpodacus purpureus.* Streaked brownish red above, rose-red on breast and sides, belly white, tips of wings and tail dark brown. Female streaked, not at all like the male. Length, six and a quarter inches. Winter visitor.

The purple finch is not purple at all, but red, in the male, and heavily brown streaked in the female. In most of the State it arrives in late October and remains until the middle of April. It is usually seen in small flocks, fairly high in trees and in open woods or groves. In the spring before leaving for the north the birds sing a rather pleasing song, usually heard in the early morning. They eat some weed seeds, but seem to prefer the seeds or buds of trees.

Family Icteridae (the blackbirds)

Purple grackle. *Quiscalus quiscula.* Shiny black, with irridescent colors in various lights. Iris of eye, bright yellow, showing up plainly against the black plumage. Length, twelve inches. Permanent resident.

The blackbird family contains an interesting group of members, some of which are not strictly black. The grackle, or crow blackbird, is the largest of the family. It is local in its distribution, being found in large flocks in certain sections, and not at all in others. It has a harsh voice, and travels in colonies, which makes the bird easy to find if there are any in the region. It nests in pines or other evergreens, usually high up. Along the coast its place is taken by the smaller boat tailed grackle. Another species, the bronzed grackle, occurs during the migrations.

The orioles. Two species of orioles occur in the State, the Baltimore and the Orchard. The **Orchard oriole** is a summer visitor, black on the head, throat, upper back, tail and parts of the wings, and reddish on the breast, underparts, shoulders and lower parts of the wings. The females and young males are yellowish green instead of red. The orchard oriole arrives in April. It is a bird of the tree-tops, found in orchards or wherever there are large trees in the open, where it eats insects exclusively. It builds a beautiful nest near the end of a branch, woven of green grasses, which dry out as the summer progresses, causing the nest to show up. The song is loud and very beautiful.

The **Baltimore oriole** is a migrant in most of the State, but remains to breed in the extreme west. It is brilliant black and orange, and resembles the orchard oriole in habits. Its nest is a deep hanging basket, placed at the end of a limb, preferably an elm. It, too, is a fine singer.

Meadowlark (Field lark). *Sturnella magna.* Brown streaked above. Breast yellow, with a large black crescent. Belly white. Length ten inches. Permanent resident, more common in winter.

The field lark is a bird of the ground, obtaining all of its food in open fields and pastures, and nesting there also. The food is largely insects, made up of grasshoppers, crickets, beetles, bugs, caterpillars, spiders, and thousand-legs. Weed seeds are eaten to a considerable extent. Practically no clover or grain is eaten, although in some localities sprouting corn is damaged to a small extent. The bird, however, is distinctly beneficial, and should not be killed.

Red-winged blackbird. *Agelaius phoeniceus.* Glossy black, shoulders scarlet, edged with yellowish. Female streaked, with no red. Length, about nine inches. Permanent resident, except in the mountains, where it is a summer visitor.

In wet and marshy places flocks of red-wings are easily found. From afar off one may hear the "ok-a-lee" of the males as they swing with outspread wings and tail on cat-tails or low shrubs. They nest in colonies, and the deep, well-woven nests are placed on the ground or in low reeds or bushes in marshes. The food consists mostly of insects, such as weevils, grasshoppers, dragonflies, ants, wasps, bugs and spiders, but some seeds are eaten. In the spring the migrating flocks may damage fields of new grain. Except for this, the bird is beneficial.

Bobolink. *Dolichonyx oryzivorous.* Head and underparts black; a large yellowish patch on the back of the neck. Middle of back streaked with buff. White patches on wings and lower back. Female dull, yellowish brown, streaked. In the fall and winter the males resemble the females. Length, seven and a quarter inches. Transient.

In the spring, from late April to late May, flocks of bobolinks with the gaily dressed males may be found in clover and alfalfa fields. Again in the fall from late August to early October they pass through on their way south, but are not so commonly seen. The flocks of spring birds make a great racket in a clover field, chattering away, occasionally bursting into the beautiful song which is so well known in the north. In some sections they damage grain crops, especially oats, although the chief food is insects and weed seeds. In rice sections the crop is damaged both in spring and fall. In this State they do comparatively little damage, and the sight of a flock of bobolinks is a welcome one in the spring.

FAMILY STURNIDAE (the starlings)

Starling. *Sturnus vulgaris.* Metallic black, bill yellow, showing up plainly against the black plumage. At times the black feathers are edged with creamy white. Length, eight and one-half inches. Permanent resident.

Like the English sparrow, the starling was imported from England. It has been in America about forty years, and in North Carolina nearly ten, although only in the last year or two has it become really common. The dates of its arrival which are on record are as follows: Willard, 1919; Pine Bluff, 1922; Raleigh, Palmira, Clayton, 1923; Greensboro, Durham, 1924; Kittrell, Asheville, 1925; Brunswick County, 1926. It is spreading rapidly at the present time. In winter the starling goes in flocks, but in summer it pairs off for nesting. It nests about buildings or in hollow trees. It drives out native birds to some extent, and may prove troublesome in grain fields.

FAMILY CORVIDAE (the crows and jays)

Crow. *Corvus brachyrhynchos.* Black. Sixteen to twenty inches. Permanent resident.

The crow is on the doubtful list of valuable birds. It eats many harmful insects, including grubworms, cutworms and others, but to offset this, it is a pest to the farmer in many ways. Young corn suffers the most, and the crow seems clever enough to succeed in pulling the newly sprouted grain in spite of all that can be done against it. It also eats young chickens, and the young of wild birds, as well as their eggs. In some localities its insect-eating is such that it does more good than harm while in other localities its thieving habits brand it as truly injurious.

The smaller fish crow is found along the coast. Its habits are similar, and it, too, plunders the nests of small birds. In the mountains the raven, a much larger species, is found.

Blue jay. *Cyanocitta cristata.* Blue above, with white bands on the wings. White below. A black band around the neck. Narrow black bars on wings and tail. A crest on the head. Length, eleven inches. Permanent resident.

The familiar jay-bird is another doubtful bird. At times it becomes troublesome to grain crops, particularly corn; at times it robs nests of small birds; but it does good service in eating many harmful insects. Wood borers, weevils, beetles, and others, are eaten. The blue jay consumes a great deal of mast. For such a beautiful bird its vocal powers are a great disappointment. The harsh screaming notes are anything but pleasant. But we can forgive him a lot because of his handsome plumage, and the pleasure that comes from the flash of bright blue on a drab winter day.

Family Tyrannidae (the flycatchers)

Wood pewee. *Myiochanes virens.* Brown olive above, much lighter below. Length about six inches. Summer visitor.

Towards the last week in April you will hear early some morning the sad plaintive notes of the pewee: "pee-a-wee, *pee*-ah!" The bird is plain and unobtrusive as it sits on a dead branch or a post. Watch it turn its head back and forth. Suddenly it darts out, captures the insect that caught its eye, and circles back to its perch. It builds a beautiful nest, saddled on to a horizontal branch, and covered with lichens. Three white eggs, spotted with a wreath of reddish brown, are laid. The food consists almost entirely of insects.

Phoebe. *Sayornis phoebe.* Dusky brown above, head darker, with a crest. Yellowish white below. Inconspicuous white wing bars. Length, seven inches. Permanent resident.

Except in the mountains the phoebe is not very common. Its call gives it its name: the note is delivered sharply and repeatedly. It builds a mud-and-grass nest on the rafters of a barn, or under a bridge, or in an old well. Its food is chiefly insects.

Crested flycatcher. *Myiarchus crinitus.* Olive gray above. Throat gray, underparts yellow. Two yellowish wing bars. Length, nine inches. Summer visitor.

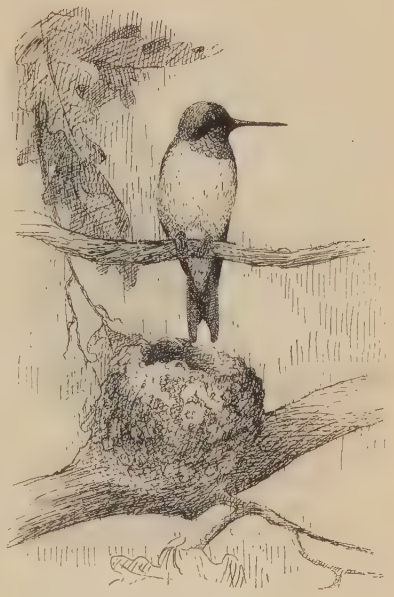
The crested flycatcher likes open woods, orchards, or groves, where it nests in hollow trees, having the peculiar habit of lining the hollow with a shed snake skin. Oftentimes it will come to our yards, where a bird house is very acceptable as a nesting site. The notes are harsh and raucous, and the birds are domineering and quarrelsome, driving off intruders at the slightest pretext. They catch insects in the typical flycatcher manner. Their stay in North Carolina is from the middle of April until September.

Kingbird. *Tyrannus tyrannus.* Dark slaty-gray above, with a concealed orange spot on the top of the head. White below. Tail black, with a white band across the tip. Length, about eight inches. Summer visitor.

The pugnacious kingbird arrives about the middle of April, and remains until September. It is fearless and ever ready to drive off an intruder. Its towering flight is characteristic, and its harsh rippling call notes are well known. It eats many harmful insects, which it catches on the wing as a flycatcher should. This bird is often called "bee-martin" because people think it eats bees. It really catches very few bees, and these are practically all drones. On the other hand, it eats robber flies, which are enemies of bees. It nests in small trees during June.

ORDER MACHROCHIRES

Family Trochilidae (the hummingbirds)



Ruby-throated hummingbird. *Archilochus colubris.* Shiny green above, dusky underparts, with ruby-red throat in male but not in female. Length, three and three-quarters inches. Summer visitor.

This tiny little gem is beloved by all. It is friendly and fearless, coming to the flowers in our gardens and often on the porch itself, where it thrusts its beak deeply into each blossom for the nectar, or for insects which may be in the flower cup. Its wings beat so fast as to be nearly invisible, and the hum they make is audible for quite a distance. The nest is a marvelous structure, a tiny thing, looking almost like an excrescence on the branch, saddled on to a limb just out of reach, and covered with lichens. Two tiny white eggs about the size of peas will hatch into young hummingbirds, which fly as well as the parents after their three weeks in the nest. The hummer remains with us from the middle of April until October.

Family Micropodidae (the swifts)

Chimney swift. *Chaetura pelagica.* Sooty brown. Tail feathers sharply pointed. Long narrow wings. Length about five inches. Summer visitor.

The chimney swift is well known from its habit of darting about over houses, even in cities, towards evening, twittering constantly, and suddenly darting with incredible speed straight into a chimney. Arriving in early April, swifts remain here until October, when they leave for unknown places. It is very curious that no one has ever discovered the winter home of the swifts: they are the only birds whose winter range is unknown. In June the nest is built of small twigs broken off while the bird is flying, and glued together on the inside of the chimney. Five or six pure white eggs are laid. The food is entirely insects, caught on the wing. This bird is not a swallow, but is related to the hummingbirds.

FAMILY CAPRIMULGIDAE
(the goatsuckers)

Nighthawk. *Chordeiles virginianus.* Mottled blackish brown and reddish; lighter below, with wavy brown bars. A large white patch on each wing. male with white on throat and tail also. Length, ten inches. Summer visitor.

The "bull-bat" or "night-jar" is most often seen in the evening or early morning. Its call note is a rather harsh "zeep", given on the wing. It also makes a loud "boom", caused by the air rushing through the wings as it drops suddenly in its flight. It catches insects on the wing for its food. The eggs are laid on a flat rock, on the ground in a field or on roofs of buildings, with no pretense at a nest. Their stay with us is from April to October.

Whip-poor-will. *Antrostomus vociferous.* Mottled grayish, reddish and white. Long wings. Conspicuous bristles around the mouth. Length, nine to ten inches. Summer visitor, not common in the east.

The call of the whip-poor-will, heard at night, makes it a well known bird by reputation. It is seldom seen, however. It is often thought that the nighthawk is the male whip-poor-will, but this is a mistake, as they are two separate species. The **chuck-wills-widow,** a larger species found in the eastern part of the state, is also sometimes called the male whip-poor-will, but this again is a different species, though with similar habits. The eggs of both species are laid on the dead leaves in the deep woods.

ORDER PICI

Family Picidae (the woodpeckers)

Flicker. *Colaptes auratus.* Brownish above, barred with black. Head gray, with a red crescent. Brownish white below, heavily spotted with black; a large black crescent on the breast. White rump patch. Yellow under the wings. Length, twelve inches. Permanent resident.

The "yellow-hammer" or "high-hole" is found in all the woods of the State, and its loud call notes, "-wick-a-wick-a-wick-a wick-a wick" are often heard. It is a beneficial bird, eating many insect pests of trees. It is particularly fond of ants, which it picks off the ground, an odd place for a woodpecker to be. It also eats wild fruits and berries. It digs out a cavity in a dead stump or branch, fairly high up, and lays six or eight white eggs. It will nest in bird boxes if they are made long and narrow and placed high up.

Red-headed woodpecker. *Melanerpes erythrocephalus.* Black above, with head and neck red. Broad white band on wings. Underparts white. Length, nine inches. Permanent resident.

The red-head is a common and familiar bird. It comes into our yards and seems to like groves around houses. Like all the other woodpeckers except the sapsuckers, it is doing much good when it pecks away at trees. It eats, besides insects, acorns, a little fruit, and is sometimes wrongly accused of eating small birds. It digs out a cavity in a tree, telephone pole, or fence post, where it lays five or six white eggs. Its harsh rolling note is distinctive.

Yellow-bellied sapsucker. *Sphyrapicus varius.* Black and white above, yellowish below, throat and top of head red in male. A black patch on the breast. Length, about nine inches. Winter visitor, but breeds in the mountains.

The sapsucker arrives from the north in September and remains until May. It may be distinguished from other woodpeckers by the fact that the white on the sides is in the form of a stripe, and by the red throat with the black patch. It is the only woodpecker which injures trees. It digs rows of little holes around tree trunks, eating the inner bark and sap, and the insects which collect there. These holes sometimes kill the trees, and in any event ruin them for lumbering purposes. Fortunately most of the sapsuckers leave the State in spring.

Downy woodpecker. *Dryobates pubescens.* Black above, with white stripes. white below. Red patch on back of neck. Length, six inches. Permanent resident.

The friendly little downy is common everywhere. It digs insects out of the bark and wood of trees, and is in every way a beneficial bird. It is especially fond of suet, and a small piece tied to a branch outside your window in winter will give you a chance to observe the downy at close range.

Other woodpeckers. Several other woodpeckers are found in the State. The **red cockaded woodpecker** is common in the pine woods of the east. It is definitely barred black and white, with a red spot on the head and a white patch on each cheek. The **pileated woodpecker,** a very large bird with a large red crest, is found in the deep woods away from civilization. The **red-bellied woodpecker** is occasionally seen. The **hairy woodpecker,** similar to the downy, but larger, is fairly common in the lowlands.

ORDER COCCYGES

Family Alcedinidae (the kingfishers)

Kingfisher. *Ceryle alcyon.* Grayish blue above, white below, bluish band on breast. Female with breastband and sides reddish. Length, twelve and a half inches. Permanent resident except in the mountains, where it is a summer visitor.

Along streams, lakes, or ponds the kingfisher is a common sight, and its harsh rattle as it flies over the water is often heard. It sits quietly on a stump or dead limb, suddenly plunging headlong into the water, emerging with a fish. The six white eggs are laid in the end of a long burrow which the kingfisher digs in the upright bank of a stream or lake. Occasionally the nest is made in a hollow tree.

Family Cuculidae (the cuckoos)

The cuckoos. Two cuckoos occur commonly in the State. They are similar in habits and general appearance. The **yellow-billed cuckoo,** *Coccyzus americanus,* is the more common of the two. It is a long slender bird, grayish brown above, whitish below, with white thumb marks on the ends of the tail feathers; lower part of beak yellow. The **black-billed cuckoo,** *Coccyzus erythropthalmus,* very similar but with the beak black, is not so common. Both cuckoos are summer visitors, arriving in April and remaining until October. They are shy birds and slink quietly away before you get near them. Usually the only inkling you have of their presence is the gutteral call "kow, kow, kow, kow", or "kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk-kuk". They are often known as "rain-crows„' because of the supposed habit of calling before a rain. The food is largely caterpillars, bugs, and grasshoppers, with some other pests, making the bird very valuable, from an agricultural standpoint.

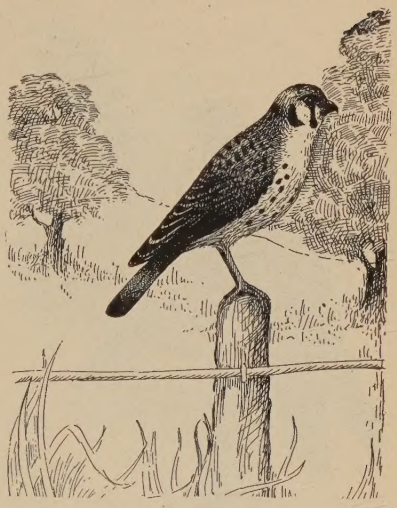
FAMILY STRIGIDAE (the owls)

Barred owl. *Strix varia.* Brown and white barred. Streaked on the belly. Length nineteen inches. Permanent resident.

The barred owl is the one most frequently heard hooting, especially in the day time. It nests early, laying two white eggs in a hollow tree during March. Its chief food is mice and rats, making it a valuable aid to the farmer. As is often the case with owls, the females are larger than the males. This owl is a night hunter, although some of the species hunt by day.

Other owls. Eight species of owls occur in the State. Practically all of them are beneficial, feeding on mice, rats, crayfish and insects. Some species kill small birds, and one or two species are large and fierce enough to kill poultry or full grown rabbits. The **barn owl,** or monkey-faced owl, which likes to nest around towers, barns, church belfries, and similar places, occurs sparingly throughout the State. It may be known by its peculiar long face and tawny color. It feeds almost entirely on harmful rodents. The little **screech owl,** whose quavering cry is often heard at night, is a well known permanent resident, nesting in hollow trees during April. It too is beneficial. The **great horned owl,** nearly twenty-four inches long, is a fierce hunter which will at times kill chickens and even turkeys. The **long-eared** and **short-eared owls** are winter visitors, as is the beautiful but fierce **snowy owl.**

FAMILY FALCONIDAE (the falcons)



Sparrow hawk. *Falco sparverius.* Reddish above, barred with black. Black band near the end of the tail. Below, whitish, spotted with black. Length, ten inches. Permanent resident.

This is the smallest of our hawks, and the handsomest. It is a beneficial hawk, destroying many noxious insects as well as mice. In the nesting season it occasionally captures small birds. It nests in May in hollow trees.

FAMILY BUTEONIDAE (the hawks)

Cooper's hawk. *Accipter cooperi.* Bluish gray above, white below streaked with brown. A long bluish tail barred with black. Length, sixteen inches. Permanent resident.

This and the similar but smaller **sharp-shinned hawk** are the only two really destructive hawks we have. The larger hawks with the broad wings, usually called chicken hawks, do not disturb poultry to any extent. But these little slim blue hawks, with long slender wings and tail, do attack chickens, as well as wild birds, and should be shot on sight.

Other hawks. The large hawks are all beneficial, eating great quantities of rats and mice, snakes, lizzards, and crawfish. The **red-shouldered** and **red-tailed hawks,** two similar dark brown species, are permanent residents. The **marsh hawk,** a large grayish hawk with a conspicuous white patch on the rump, is a winter visitor. Several other hawks occur to a greater or lesser extent.

FAMILY CATHARTIDAE (the buzzards)

Turkey buzzard. *Cathartes aura septentrionalis.* Black, with brown edging to the feathers. Skin of head and neck bare and red. Length, thirty inches. Permanent resident.

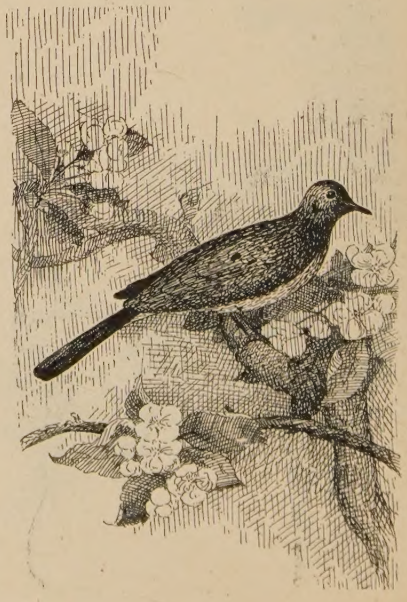
The buzzard is a valuable bird as a scavenger, and should be protected. It has been charged that buzzards spread hog cholera and anthrax, but this does not seem to be true. Buzzards have strong digestive juices, and germs are killed by them. Buzzards may spread disease by carrying the germs on their feet, but no more so than sparrows, flies, pigeons, poultry, horses or cattle. Buzzards nest in April or May on the ground in the protection of a rock or fallen tree. The smaller **black vulture**, or South Carolina buzzard, is less common, but is found all year round.

ORDER COLUMBAE

FAMILY COLUMBIDAE (the doves)

Mourning dove. *Zenaidura macroura carolinensis.* Soft olive brown above, buffy gray below. White tips to outer tail feathers. Length, about twelve inches. Permanent resident.

These doves are common throughout the State in open country, fields, and open woods. They are great seed eaters, and destroy untold numbers of injurious weed seeds. They pick up some waste grain, but do not destroy crops to any extent. No insects are eaten. In winter doves go in flocks, but in summer the flocks largely break up for nesting. The nest is a poorly-made platform of twigs, placed low in a tree, or on the ground, and containing two white eggs. The sad call, "coo-ooh, coo, coo, coo", is well known.



ORDER GALLINAE

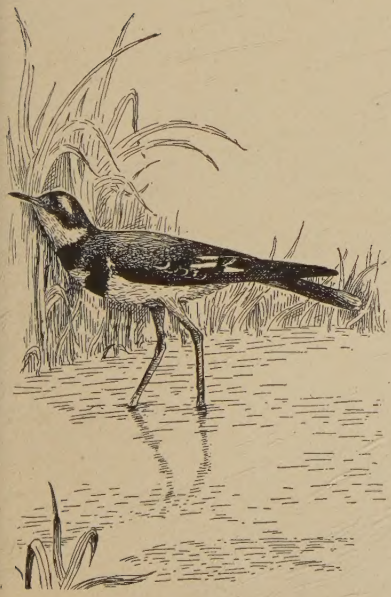
FAMILY ODONTOPHORIDAE (the quails)

Bob White (partridge, quail). *Colinus virginianus.* Above, mottled reddish-brown and gray; underparts white barred with black. White spots on head in male, yellow in female. Length, ten inches. Permanent resident.

The quail is a valuable bird, both from the standpoint of its aid to the farmer, and its reputation as a game bird. Its food consists of harmful insects and weed seeds, with some waste grain and wild fruit. As a game bird, it is unsurpassed and is known to all sportsmen. By proper protection, and application of the game laws, it may be saved to the State for many years to come. It nests throughout the summer on the ground.

ORDER LIMICOLAE

FAMILY CHARADRIIDAE (the plovers)



Kildeer. *Oxyechus vociferus.* Grayish above, white below. Two black bands across the breast. Length, ten inches. Permanent resident.

The kildeer is most often seen running along the ground in fields, or if disturbed, flying overhead crying dee! dee! kill-dee! In winter they fly mostly in flocks, but in the spring the pairs separate for nesting. The nest is merely a hollow in the field, where the four scrawled and spotted eggs lie with their pointed ends towards the center. The kildeer is a beneficial bird, attacking many insect pests. It eats among others the cotton boll weevil, bill bugs, alfalfa weevil, cowpea curculio, wire worms, cotton worms, white grubs, and mosquitoes. It deserves protection in every way.